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Dr. E. M. Wilbur
with cordial greetings
from V. D. Davis

MANCHESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD.

The Call to the Ministry.

AN ADDRESS

BY THE

REV. HENRY GOW, B.A., D.D.,

AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION,

16th OCTOBER, 1922.

The Open Way of the Spirit.

VISITOR'S ADDRESS

BY THE

REV. V. D. DAVIS, B.A.,

AT THE CLOSE OF THE PREVIOUS SESSION,

22nd JUNE, 1922.

The College adheres to its original principle of freely imparting Theological knowledge without insisting on the adoption of particular Theological doctrines.

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The Call to the Ministry.

FELLOW-STUDENTS,

We meet together at the beginning of another session, some of you to continue your studies for the ministry, some of you gathered here for your first term, looking out with interest and hope on the studies which lie before you. This is an unusually promising opening of our new session in that we have sixteen Theological Students—a larger number than for many years—and it is unique in that we have six Women Students for the ministry. We all rejoice in the enriched life and variety of character which is in the College to-day. This College does not exist solely for the preparation of ministers, although that has been its main function, and is so still. I am going to speak to those who are intending to be ministers in whatever branch of the Christian Church they may feel called to serve.

The Ministry of Religion as a definite profession, we hear on all sides to-day, is a very difficult and unpopular calling. It is discredited in the minds of many of the young men and women of our time. The main cause for this does not depend on economic reasons. It is true that many of the salaries are very scanty; it is true that there are many anxieties and troubles of a material kind connected with the ministry. But this alone would not explain the unpopularity of the ministerial calling. Men and women with ideal aims are not to be frightened out of a cause to which a passionate faith and love attract them, by talk about financial difficulties. A man does not wait to fall in love with his future wife until she has come into a fortune.

The real difficulty lies deeper. There is an atmosphere of scepticism about the whole value and meaning of public worship and of organised religion. We wonder if preaching is any good, or at any rate if *our* preaching would be any good. We might learn to set a broken bone, or to draw up

a legal agreement, or to make a machine, or to teach Latin or arithmetic, and there is something achieved which the world needs in doing such things; but what is the use of talking about goodness or God? How can we imagine that we know more about goodness or God than those to whom we speak? We have no unique knowledge of these things: we have no magic powers. The need of the world is not for worship but for work, so it is said; not for prayer but for performance.

On the other hand this attitude of mind does not mean a contempt for all religion. If any man stood up and said all religion is nonsense; all ideas of duty and self-sacrifice are superstitious folly; the only power that rules the world is force, and the only sensible man is he who makes use of force for his own advantage, it would not be only members of the Christian Church who would express a conventional condemnation. It would be the youth of the nation, it would be the hearts and minds of thousands of every class and creed and of no creed who would repudiate that statement of the meaning of life. There is much gross materialism in the world to-day, as there always has been; there are many who live as if there was no God and no divine meaning in life. Some of them are connected with Churches and many are not, but a definite dogmatic materialism which promulgates these doctrines in the name of truth with pride and confidence is not the mark of our time. Fewer phrases are more popular than that which asserts that the problems of our time, so complex, so confounding, so dangerous, can only be solved by the aid of religion. It has become almost a cant phrase through its popularity. But it is not a mere lip profession. Men and women generally do really feel there is something in religion; that God is not an empty name and that duty and love and self-sacrifice are worthy of reverence. The blindness of those who ignore the goodness of humanity and the promise of the time is quite as deep and more serious than the blindness of those who ignore the evil and the dangers of the time. It is not because the Churches stand for these things that they ignore or despise the Churches. They are not attacking the Churches because there is no God and no duty and no ideal

meaning in life: they are not abstaining from Church worship because they deny God. Their objection to the Churches is not the unreality of God but the unreality of the Churches' faith in God: their objection to the Churches is not the unreality of duty and self-sacrifice and brotherly love, but the unreality of the talk about these things in the Churches. The Archbishop of York said a few days ago: "Men want a true religion as never before. That is the hope. They do not find it in the Church. That is the trouble. Religion attracts: the Church repels."

Idealism is not dead: Religion is not dead. We are not living in a world where all high hope for humanity has disappeared, where self-sacrifice is laughed at and despised, where useful service is considered stupid and effete. There are too many self-constituted Elijahs who cry, "I, only I, am left." We see terrible evils about us: we see cruelty and lust and greed and luxury and violence widely spread; we recognise the power of these evil things in our own souls; they are not merely outside but within. But there is something not only in you and me but in countless thousands of our fellow-men which is weary of these things, which rebels against them, which condemns them. They are not the real heart faith of humanity. Religion in some sense we need and must have.

The idea that life here is just a scramble for happiness and power, that it has no deeper meaning, that there is no unseen and eternal, that there are no moral values, that the only value is pleasure, is repellent not merely to a few special Christians here and there, it is a proposition which is generally denied. Outside as well as inside the Churches all clear-thinking, responsible men and women would say "that way madness lies," that way lies ruin for individuals as for nations. Men may live for a time as if that proposition were true; you and I may live sometimes—as we all do live sometimes—as if the pleasures of the moment were the supreme thing, as if there was no God. Could any one of us dare to say that we have never acted on purely self-regarding lines, carried away by passion or self-interest? But in our best and truest selves

we do not really believe it; there is a protest however mild, a self-reproach however dim, a shame however veiled, when we look back upon such deeds. And this is true not only of you and me but of our fellow-men. We must not think of ourselves as superior beings, looking down with contempt and pity on a seething mass of wholly evil men and women. The cry of Elijah is never true, "I, only I, am left." It is less true to-day than it has been in many former ages.

The world needs religion then, it even wants religion, it recognises with reverence the principles of religion. We may all act from time to time in defiance of religion but we do not really repudiate it. Few men could be found who would say that Jesus was a fool who gave up a comfortable life of prosperity and peace in Nazareth for a silly life of service and love. Few men would say that they would have admired him more if he had made much money by farming taxes. The heart of humanity still responds with a thrill of passionate joy and thankfulness to men who live in the spirit, who believe in God and who work and suffer for an ideal. In all classes and creeds and nations there are thousands who are striving for ideals which demand sacrifice and suffering, and there are many men who feel in looking on at such service that it stands for something true and worthy of reverence. Men and women are trying to do in politics, in education, in social affairs what the Churches have tried to teach and what they think the Churches have failed to teach. There is a great mass of idealism in the world to-day finding expression in secular affairs. Thank God for it.

But you and I are here to-day because we do not think the Churches so utterly effete and hopeless as they seem to be in the eyes of the world. We know that they have often failed, but we do not feel that failure inherent in their character. We think that they have taught doctrines which misrepresent or pervert or hide the beauty and power of appeal in the Gospel of Christ. We think that they have claimed magic powers which they do not possess and that their priests have assumed authority which was not given them by God. We think that, even when it seems to us their doctrines are

true, there is often a lack of reality, a want of passionate consecration, a failure in courage and imagination, which mars their work. But we are here not merely because we believe in God and in ideals, not merely because we believe in righteousness as essential for nations and for men. This is shared with multitudes outside the Churches. We are here because we believe in the Church and in united worship and in the ministry of Christ. We recognise gladly how much good is being done, how much faith in ideal ends, how much sacrifice and personal consecration to human service exist on every side of us. We believe that many who enter the profession of Education or Medicine or other so-called secular employments are feeling the same sense of consecration, the same desire for service, the same belief in God which we feel in entering the ministry. We believe that no man ought to take up any work without that sense of consecration and loyalty to the community, feeling that he is not living to himself, seeking his own advantage merely, but doing something which makes for the welfare of the world and prepared to sacrifice himself for its sake.

But you have chosen the calling of a Minister of Religion because you believe in the essential rightness and value and necessity of the Christian Church. You believe that Sunday worship with its hymns and prayers, uniting men and women of all ages and classes in thankfulness and aspiration, is a natural expression and support of the life of religion, that it makes for fellowship and sympathy and mutual service. You believe in preaching and you wish in all humility to become preachers. You know how difficult it is to say what you really feel about the deepest things: how stumbling and ineffective and superficial preachers often are: you will realise it more and more the harder you try and the higher and truer your ideals. You are confident that it is not the desire of popularity or praise, not the desire to have an opportunity of saying what you like without interruption, not the pleasure of being able to scold or criticise or express your own opinion about everything and everybody, which is your motive for becoming preachers. You believe in preaching as a means

of grace, as one of the ways by which the human soul finds refreshment and healing and strength and confidence. You have yourselves heard sermons which have lifted off a load of cares, which have given you new hope and energy, which have brightened your outlook on life, which have stimulated your thoughts and revealed you to yourselves. You have heard many dull sermons, of course, many which did not appeal to your minds or touch your inward life, but you have not lost your faith in preaching. There is no more reason for a preacher to lose faith in preaching because some preaching is bad than for an artist to lose faith in painting because some pictures are bad, or for a musician to lose faith in music because some compositions are vulgar or some executants incompetent.

You want to become preachers, not necessarily great preachers, but preachers who, through their own faith and thought and ideals and sympathy, can touch the hearts of some men and women, can strengthen them in temptation, comfort them in sorrow, and encourage them in failure and defeat. You want to interpret the Gospel of Jesus in its meaning for our modern life. You want to speak of the eternal principles which are the guide of individuals and of nations. You want to speak of what God means to you in your own life.

It is a great endeavour: there are many who shrink from it with a certain humility and who say, "I am not good enough or wise enough." It is a feeling which any one entering the ministry ought to have, but it is not a feeling which ought to prevent them entering the ministry. It is the prerequisite of any one entering the ministry. I do not say that every one who says to himself "I am not good or wise enough to be a minister," ought to be a minister, but I am quite sure that no one ought to enter the ministry who has not often said to himself "I am not good enough or wise enough to be a minister."

That shrinking, that sense of insufficiency, that feeling of a call which is beyond his own unaided powers, is a sign of our calling. It is what Isaiah felt when he cried, "I am a man of unclean lips." It was what Jeremiah felt when he

cried, "Ah, Lord God, behold I cannot speak for I am a child." The mere sense of insufficiency alone is, of course, an inadequate reason for entering the ministry, but when it is united with a belief in the value of public worship and in preaching, when we feel that the life of the spirit is the life for which we long, when we feel that the world needs this more than all other things, when we long to save and help mankind and to make for joy and peace and love through obedience to God, then the sense of insufficiency is conquered by that inward call which constitutes the meaning of the ministry.

But it is not only public worship and preaching to which you would devote yourselves. You might be a lay preacher and do that. You desire to be settled ministers in an organised Church community. That means a personal friendship founded on common needs and hopes and ideals which is of a unique kind. A true minister will love his congregation, will believe in them and see the best in them, will be their friend in times of sorrow and in times of joy. He will be at home with little children and with young men and women, and with the middle-aged and old; he will not condescend or play a part, but take an intense interest in *persons* of very varied characters. It is a great and unique opportunity of service. The great drama of human life, so enthralling, so tragic, so sad and yet often so beautiful, is shown to you in the lives of the men and women who will form your congregation. We all fail often to understand or to help as we might have done; but the wonder of every minister's life to himself is that there is so much response, so much recognition of his friendship, so much that is revealed to him of the hearts and minds of those with whom he lives. That is the outlook for you, and it glows with promise of good and joy, of sympathy and service.

Meanwhile there is the work of study here. You will have delightful fellowship with one another, many arguments, many conversations on light and serious themes. You will form friendships which will be a permanent enrichment of your life. You will have large opportunities for reading and quiet thought, and you are living in a University which is full of

memorials of a great past, which claims your reverence for learning and deep thought, and which appeals to your imagination and your love of beauty in architecture, in nature and in man. You are living together in a College whose principles of freedom in pursuit of truth and faith in God and devotion to the service of humanity give you all a sense of unity however diverse your beliefs, and claim your loyalty and devotion.

A minister's life is a dangerous as well as a difficult one. It is dangerous because it is so free. There are no office hours, no regular routine. A minister may waste his time more easily than other men. That is specially true of theological students. In this free College there is no constant imposition of tasks, no interfering watchfulness as to the way you spend your time. It is easy to fritter away your time; easy to allow yourself to read a little here and a little there, and to avoid hard and strenuous study. It is easy for a student to think he is wasting his time in unprofitable studies. It is one of the worst wastes of time to complain you are wasting your time on the prescribed studies and to approach them in a wearied and complaining spirit. To meet the inward demands of your College life, in study, in fellowship, in daily communion with God, in joyous courage and stern self-control, is the preparation for the service of man and the ministry of Christ. It is a great and noble calling; it is a purpose and ideal which should fill your student years with high resolves and deep consecration and quiet peace and joy.

We teachers in the College share your hopes and sympathise with your aspirations. We long for nothing more than to help you to the utmost of our powers to fulfil your hopes and to join with you in preparing yourselves for so great, so needed, and so beautiful a service.

The Open Way of the Spirit.

My Friends and Fellow-students in Manchester College,

It has been the custom for considerably more than a hundred years for the appointed Visitor, being a minister of experience in the service of religion, to address the students at the end of the College session on some aspects of the work to which they are to be devoted. That has been from the first the prevailing intention of the Visitor's address; to draw more closely, if he may, the bonds of sympathy between the students in their time of preparation, and that life of religious fellowship and service in the Churches, to which they are looking forward, in the hope that so he may help in some measure to keep the steadfast light of the ideal burning in their hearts. Since the College came to Oxford distinguished members of the University have indeed accepted in another sense the office of Visitor, a mark of recognition in the academic world which we highly prize; but to rank with these eminent scholars I have no vestige of a claim, and mine is a different and humbler function, but at the same time a privilege deeply valued. It is simply that of a friend in the field of religious service, who rejoices in the thought of the work for which you are preparing, and would gladly bear some testimony to the kindling and quickening power of the ideal to which this College and the Churches out of whose life it had its birth are alike devoted, dedicated as they are "to Truth, to Liberty, to Religion."

My address is directed especially to the Divinity Students of the College. For them in the first instance it was established, but at the same time with the wider outlook, which desired to secure for the laity also, among those who were shut out from the benefits of the national Universities, the advantages of enlightened culture and religious teaching on a broad undogmatic basis. The original foundation in

Manchester, in the year 1786, was "on a plan affording a full and systematic course of education for divines, and preparatory instruction for the other learned professions, as well as for civil and commercial life," with this declaration of fundamental principle, that it should be "open to young men of every religious denomination, from whom no test or confession of faith will be required." It was out of the necessity of maintaining a supply of well-equipped and faithful ministers for Nonconformist Churches that the earlier academies, and Manchester College in its turn, had their origin, but with the concurrent interest in the higher education of the whole body of the people; and the doors of the College were open from the first to all who desired to come in, who would recognise the principle on which it was established. The primary object was the training of men for a free ministry, but there were students in the earliest years who were designated for service in the Established Church, and in the year 1798 a classical tutor was appointed, who was a clergyman of that Church. The appointment was defended on the ground that "as this institution is founded on the most liberal and catholic principles and designed to furnish tuition to all young men who will conform to its regulations and discipline, without distinction of political party or religious persuasion," there could be no valid objection to the choice of such a candidate, provided that he was a man of capacity and discretion, who would be willing to work under the prescribed conditions and could be trusted not to stir up either political or theological strife. The mathematical tutor at that time was John Dalton, a member of the Society of Friends, who was already laying the foundations of his great eminence as a man of science. Thus the broad inclusive spirit of the College and its principle of undogmatic freedom were clearly demonstrated in those first years, and through the changing conditions of the various migrations through which it has passed, from Manchester to York, to Manchester again, to London and finally to Oxford, it has remained true to its ideal, not always without controversy, but happily with a constant vindication of the soundness and the spiritual effectiveness of its foundation principle.

The primary object of this College, I think I am right in saying, remains, as from the first, the training of men for the ministry of free Churches. Its dedication "to Truth, to Liberty, to Religion" is a constant reminder of the aim we are set here to pursue. Truth to be followed, simply as truth directs, in the freedom of the spirit; truth in the life, which is religion, binding the soul to God, in an absolute submission, with consecrated purpose. There is a wonderful joy and a liberating impulse in the thought that so we may give ourselves into the hands of the Eternal, to be led in God's way, and be doing our Father's will.

The College was brought to Oxford in that faith. It was felt that in a free School of Theology, enriched by all the added interests and influences which association with this great University would bring, men could best be trained for the service to which they were destined, while at the same time, without assumption, but humbly and with assured conviction, witness would be borne to the principle of freedom in teaching and learning and in the fellowship of religious life. The testimony is borne by the simple presence of the College here and by its habitual practice. Its doors are open. Whoever desires to share in the teaching it can give and the training it can offer for the ministry of religion, in whatever Church he may find hereafter that his service can be rendered, is free to come, and is welcomed on a footing of absolute equality and cordiality into the life of the College. If, trained in an atmosphere of freedom, conviction should yet lead him to ministry in a Church not yet freed from dogmatic fetters, not even desiring such liberty, that is matter for his own mature judgment and his conscience. We may have had other hopes and may regret the decision, but truth is served by that fidelity to conscience, sympathy and affection are not diminished, and the way is kept open here for an absolute sincerity. What we hold to be the true ideal is still maintained.

At the same time it must be clear that in training men and sending them into the ministry of Churches founded on the same principle of spiritual freedom, or as pioneers into the open field of the world, the College is fulfilling the function

nearest to its own heart. For this, above all, as I have said, it was established, and in spite of all the broadening of outlook and the breaking down of barriers in the religious world, which the progress of recent years has brought, the need remains. There is a call for service in those Churches, and their witness is still required in the land. The field of service which they offer may appear in the world's eyes narrow and unattractive, bare of popular applause or any prizes for ambition; but it is in fact wide in its scope as the purposes of God, and there are hidden springs of joy in it, which for the faithful labourer do not fail. The open way of spiritual freedom has in itself great attraction for the devout and fearless heart, and in it a man surely may rejoice in the call to give "the utmost for the Highest."

In contrast to the gladness of that open way we may note the trouble that is now acknowledged by many earnest Churchmen from the hampering restrictions of a dogmatic creed. A very pointed instance of this we saw in last year's Conference of Modern Churchmen at Cambridge. You may remember the confession of the Rev. Harold Anson, Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Lincoln, in his paper on "The Proper Uses of a Creed":—

> "It is not good to hold to a creed or a confession about which authority can say, and *must* say, in order to keep earnest and intelligent men within the Church, 'you need not believe this, but you must not deny it'—'*you* may regard it as figurative, and *he* may regard it as historical, but you *must* all recite it, in order to keep the Church from splitting.'"

And if the "highly ingenious explanations of the creed" to which Modernist Theologians resort, and the "long toleration of subterfuge" were justified, it was only on the ground that the present is a period of transition. Thus Mr. Anson declared:—

> "I cannot regard it as anything but a most unsatisfactory and temporary expedient, until we poor old crabs have developed a new shell. 'Here in Rome,' said Mazzini, 'we must not live as moral mediocrities.' Here in God's Church we must not adopt a mediocre standard of intellectual honesty. We must not go on asking for reverence for formularies which we don't take literally. . . Sooner or later we must

reformulate our faith, with a different emphasis, and make it the most sacred part of our worship, a high and holy profession of our true faith, which we can only utter with fear and trembling, because it does in truth express the deepest realities, and bears witness to the deepest glories and tragedies of our own lives—a true confession of a Living God." (*Modern Churchman,* September, 1921, p. 336.)

I have cited this instance as marking unmistakably the difference between the position of these men, who desire to be free to follow truth, but find insuperable obstacles in the way, and ours in this College and in the Churches which hold to the same fundamental faith. And I would add this question: Is not the trouble due to a misconception of what is required to maintain the unity of the Church and to make its testimony clear to the world? Can a formulated creed really serve that purpose? And if established by authority as a permanent standard of belief, can it serve the interest of truth? Is it not better to abandon a futile attempt, which in so far as it might succeed in setting up a dogmatic test and barrier, must be injurious to the deepest interest of spiritual faith? Is not the Church itself, in the very fact of its existence, as a union of worshipping people, pledged to the service of truth and goodness, a confession, and a sufficient confession, of faith in the living God? Teaching there must always be, and confession of the living convictions of truth at every moment in the onward progress of experience and the unfolding spiritual life of man, but always with acknowledgment that the Word of God cannot be stereotyped, that where there is life there is constant growth in apprehension of the truth. No one can forecast the glories yet to be revealed. What is required of us is faithfulness in the field of service here, in the life with God, obedient to the heavenly vision, that by us his Kingdom may be advanced. For this, in the open way, we have the guidance of the inward light of Truth and Goodness. It is the living God who leads. Faith is not acceptance of the formulated words of human understanding; it is surrender to the consciousness of that deeper life, within our lives, of the Eternal, the present Spirit quickening and sustaining, "in whose will is our peace."

In confirmation of the truth and practical effectiveness of this view of religion, let me call your attention to the new Confession of Faith recently issued by the Society of Friends. It is not a creed, it is a testimony, searching and convincing, to the reality of truth in the life, which is religion. The Quaker "Book of Discipline" was first issued in 1783, three years before the foundation of this College. It gathered up various instructions previously issued by the Yearly Meeting as to the conduct of Friends both as individuals and as a religious society. Statements of doctrinal belief were added in subsequent editions, and it grew to be a substantial volume, as issued in the fifth edition of 1883, divided into three parts, which treat respectively of Christian Doctrine, Christian Practice and Church Government. These three parts have now been issued as separate volumes, revised up to date, within the last eleven years, the first part, completing the work, in the present year. The title of this first part, which is practically a new publication, marks the vital significance of its testimony as a declaration of essential principle, arising out of the manifest revival of life and spiritual power among Friends within the last generation. In place of the single term "Christian Doctrine" the title now runs, "Christian Life, Faith and Thought." "The attempt has been made throughout," the preface tells us, "to state truth, not by formulating it, but by expressing it through the vital personal and corporate experience of Friends. Life itself, with its variety of outlook and condition, seems to us the way by which God has spoken to men through the prophets, and supremely through Jesus Christ, and by which his living Spirit has spoken and is still speaking to men."

Therefore it is that the greater part of the book is composed not of doctrinal statements, though these are there, from that of George Fox and others to the Governor of Barbadoes in 1671, down to the most recent utterances of the present day. The first and largest section is composed of selected passages from the personal testimony of Friends, illustrating their spiritual experience, and at the end there is another section on the Way of Life, briefly setting forth the

ideal of conduct and worship among Friends, with a note that this subject is further pursued in the separate volume on Christian Practice.

The record of experiences begins with that of Fox himself, telling how he had found the religious teachers of his time miserable comforters; but when all his hopes of them were gone, how he heard a voice which said, "There is One, even Jesus Christ, that can speak to thy condition." "And when I heard it," he adds, "my heart did leap for joy." And later, when he was under great temptations, heavily burdened by the thought of all the evil in the hearts and minds of wicked men, he tells of the light that came to him:—"I cried to the Lord, saying, Why should I be thus, seeing I was never addicted to commit those evils? And the Lord answered, that it was needful I should have a sense of all conditions: how else should I speak to all conditions? And in this I saw the infinite love of God. I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness: and in that also I saw the infinite love of God; and I had great openings."

Then follow a number of characteristic testimonies of early Friends and others of succeeding generations through two hundred and fifty years. On the roll of honoured names are those of Isaac Penington, Robert Barclay, William Penn, John Woolman, Elizabeth Fry, John Bright, Caroline Stephen and many others. Towards the close comes the testimony of John Wilhelm Rowntree, one of the younger leaders, whose early death in 1905, deeply deplored, yet left the inspiration of new vision and a new energy of faithfulness in the hearts of many friends. It is told of him that when, in the prime of his manhood, he was made aware that he was doomed to coming and irreparable blindness, as he went out from the consultation into the street, and stood for a few moments by some railings to collect himself, he "suddenly felt the love of God wrap him about as though a visible presence enfolded him, and a joy filled him such as he had never known before." It is in keeping with the whole spirit of these collected testi-

monies, which might have been many times multiplied, that among them are verses from Whittier's poem "The Eternal Goodness."

In such records we have the best declaration of faith. How the matter is regarded by Friends is well expressed in a paper on "The True Basis of Christian Unity," issued in 1917, and quoted in this book.

> "In regard to the use of the word 'Faith' for the body of beliefs which a Christian Church holds, the Society of Friends has never been content to use the word with a purely intellectual connotation. The Faith which is essential to Christianity it conceives to be a much deeper thing—the response of a man's whole being to the love and grace of God when this is inwardly revealed to him. . . . We do not in the least deprecate the attempt, which must be made, since man is a rational being, to formulate intellectually the ideas which are implicit in religious experience. . . . But it should always be recognised that all such attempts are provisional, and can never be assumed to possess the finality of ultimate truth. There must always be room for development and progress, and Christian thought and inquiry should never be fettered by theory."

And a note is added of these three dangers of formulated statements of belief:—

> "(i) They tend to crystallise thought on matters that will always be beyond any final embodiment in human language; (ii) They fetter the search for truth and for its more adequate expression; and (iii) They set up a fence which tends to keep out of the Christian fold many sincere and seeking souls who would gladly enter it." (p. 14.)

In a further paper, presented to the Yearly Meeting in 1920, there is this clear declaration:—

> "To us creeds have no value save as they testify to the eternal realities which men must apprehend by spiritual experience and express by life and conduct. A vital creed is not static but dynamic; it can never be finally expressed in any form of words; it depends upon and is held in the most intimate connection with the developing life of the Spirit in the souls of men. Thus, while truth is eternal, our apprehension of it enlarges, and our expression of it changes, and Friends do not feel prepared to pin their adhesion to a form of words which at best embody a sincere attempt to define that measure of truth which has so far been apprehended in words appropriate to the age in which they were spoken." (p. 72.)

In the light of that conviction the collected doctrinal statements which follow are to be read. We are warned to note

especially the dates of the various documents. They are offered as "vital expressions of truth as it was understood at the time they were written." There is, for instance, a Declaratory Minute of 1829 (a time of stress in theological controversy arising out of the Hicksite separation in America) which is accompanied by the significant remark: "The application made of the Old Testament passages follows the mode of thought of the time." It puts the matter in a way which no thoughtful educated mind, unblinded by dogmatic prejudice, could now regard as right. The earlier statements, as in Fox's Epistle of 1671, follow the general lines of orthodox Christian belief, largely in the language of biblical literalism; others, out of the heart of the same vital Christian faith, are in the language of to-day. Take, for instance, these sentences from a Message of 1907:—

"We are called, as a Society and as individuals, to witness to the true meaning of the Real Presence of God in man. . . . We shall pray that the life of each one may be made a sacrament—showing forth and handing on to others the light which Christ has revealed to us, the love which he has made real to us. Our thoughts will go out more and more to our fellow-men, desiring in His spirit to share our brothers' burden, and to bring them into touch with Him who is the Way, the Truth, the Life, until they too feel that in Christ Jesus they can hear the beating of the Father's heart." (p. 76.)

Again, in 1920:—

"To-day, by life and word, it is our aim to call men back to the Light of God in their own souls, which, if they do but obey it, will lead them to the salvation that is in Jesus Christ. This first-hand religion is what men need, and we testify to its power in our own lives, as in the lives of our forefathers in the faith. Far as we fall short even of our own ideals, it is for this we stand as a religious Society of Friends, seeking to show, by friendliness to enemy as well as to friend, by simplicity of life, by freedom from class or race or sex prejudice and dominance, that the spirit of Christ still has power in the world." (p. 84.)

And in the previous year, in an "Appeal to all Men":—

"The profound need of our time is to realise the everlasting truth of the common Fatherhood of God—the Spirit of Love—and the oneness of the human race. We have used the words of Christ, but we have not acted upon them. We have called ourselves by His name, but we have not lived in His Spirit. Nevertheless the Divine seed is in all men. As men realise its presence and follow the light of Christ in their hearts

they enter upon the right way of life, and receive power to overcome evil by good. Thus will be built the City of God. We stretch out our hands in fellowship, sympathy and love, across frontiers, lands and seas. We call upon all men everywhere to unite in the service of healing the broken world, to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ." (p. 85.)

There we have a people, closely united in religious fellowship, Christians in very truth, if any such are to be found under the heavens, and as a religious society with clearest title to be designated a Church of the living God,—since it is the people who are the Church—making in this way their confession of faith. It is a confession of faith in freedom and in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. No dogmatic creed is required, or is competent, to declare or to defend the unity of this Church, or to establish the foundation on which it rests. Life alone, with its inward significance and its moving forces, can declare what these people are, individually and in their corporate unity as a Church, and can show to the world that in which they trust. And surely there is much that we may all learn of them, both on the inward side of spiritual faith and on the practical side of faithful service in the world. That is why I have thankfully taken this opportunity to call attention to this new publication of theirs, with the wealth of interest, and I will add, of inspiration, which it contains.

There are differences of administration, but one Spirit. In the gathered silence of a meeting of Friends, the spirit of worship and of guidance may very surely prevail, and out of it the living word of truth may arise, with redeeming power. Of how that may be, Robert Barclay, and John Woolman and Caroline Stephen, in their several generations are signal witnesses; and it is an experience as living to-day as in any period of the history of Friends. But that same Spirit, may we not say, is with the man who, in the quietness of his own study, seeks to be surrendered absolutely to the truth, to be guided in all knowledge, penetrated by the spirit of goodness and of love; and words may be given to him to speak, which he knows are not his own, but of that other deeper Life of the Eternal, which through him shall minister of truth and love to other hearts. The words may be written down, or that for

which they stand may be cherished in his heart, and then at a stated time and after the utterance, it may be, of stated words of prayer, still under the sense of the same overshadowing and quickening Presence, be spoken to an assembled people, and prove effectual for the kindling of the better life in them. The living God is there also, the witness of the life declares it, and so in different ways, but to the one great end, he leads his people.

What we have to bear in mind, be our method what it may, is that it is not of ourselves, but of him in whom we trust, the Eternal, God, our Father. Some call him Christ, and the guidance of the inward light the light of Christ, as though he were himself the Eternal, rather than the clearest beam from that exhaustless Fountain of light. But do we not all acknowledge that there is only One Eternal God, the ever-present, life-giving Spirit? And to me it seems clear that we must say it is He, our Father, the Giver of all good. He gives to us our friends, and this one great Friend of all, the Chief of faithful souls, and bears witness in our hearts to the grace and truth of Jesus Christ and the fellowship of the children of God, into which, in his spirit, we may be gathered. But by whatever way, through all the joys of life and all the discipline of mortal years, "follow the Gleam," attentive always to the Truth teaching inwardly, and be glad that you are called into this open way of vision and of service.

NOTE.

The three parts of the BOOK OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (London Yearly Meeting) have now been issued in separate volumes, as follows :—

Part I. Christian Life, Faith and Thought. 1922.
Paper edition, 1/- ; Cloth gilt, 2/-

Part II. Christian Practice. 1911.
Cloth gilt, 1/6.

Part III. Church Government. 1917.
Cloth gilt, 1/6.

To be had from The Friends' Bookshop,
140, Bishopsgate, London, E.C. 2.

For the work of the Ministry see also :—

"A MINISTER OF GOD," Selections from the Occasional Sermons and Addresses of JOHN HAMILTON THOM, author of "Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ." (Visitor to Manchester College, 1866-80.) Edited, with a Memoir, by V. D. Davis, B.A., 1901. 2/- net.

Book Room, Essex Hall, Essex Street, Strand,
London, W.C. 2.